

## **GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON STATE VETERANS' CEMETERIES**

- ❑ What were the reasons for establishing the entities proposed for reorganization and how has this public need changed?

**The Governor's Commission on State Veterans' Cemeteries was established in 2003, as the result of SB 748 (McPherson) to provide an orderly process to assess the need for the creation of additional state veterans cemeteries and to prioritize sites for the construction of future cemeteries. At the time, there were two open, federal veterans cemeteries (National Cemeteries) in California and one state veterans cemetery scheduled to be established in Shasta County. According to the author of the legislation, these cemeteries were not considered sufficient to meet the need for veterans' burials. The commission is to provide a report to the Governor and the Legislature on recommendations for the number and sites for veterans' cemeteries by May 31, 2005.**

**Since the commission was established, the federal government has authorized two additional National Cemeteries in California. One of these will be located near Sacramento, in the town of Dixon. The other will be near the city of Bakersfield. These two cemeteries will go a long way toward meeting the need for burial space for veterans in California. There has also been some discussion concerning the expansion of National Cemetery facilities in the San Francisco and San Diego areas.**

- ❑ Which functions will be eliminated by the reorganization, and which functions will be performed differently as a result of the reorganization?

**The commission's main function is to assess the need for additional state veterans' cemeteries. This function will be transferred to the California Department of Veterans Affairs. If there is a perceived need for additional state veterans cemeteries, advisory groups could be impaneled under the purview of the Agency Secretary on an *ad hoc* basis to make such a determination. The Secretary can also obtain expert advice from professional associations or through consulting contracts as needed, on an *ad hoc* basis. The California Department of Veterans Affairs, as part of its mission to serve veterans, will continue to work with veterans groups and individual veterans on issues of importance to them.**

- ❑ For each board or commission proposed for absorption into your agency, please describe the structure, process, number and type of positions that will fulfill these functions.

**If the need arises in the future to work further on the cemetery needs in California, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs will utilize existing staff within his Executive Team, the Capital Development & Construction Division and the Veterans Services Division to help fulfill these functions. Since there are no current needs for additional studies regarding a state cemetery, there is no estimate as to what would be required to fulfill those needs.**

- ❑ What savings (if any) will be captured as a result of the reorganization? What will be done with those savings and how will they be accounted for in the budget?

**Since the commission has not yet met, there have been no expenses. The legislation creating the commission did not authorize payment for members. It is assumed that per diem and other travel expenses will be paid if the commission is ever assembled and meets. At the time this commission was created, we estimated that the total fiscal impact would be less than \$50,000. The elimination of the commission would save these future costs.**

- ❑ For boards or commissions that are proposed for elimination, who are the appointing authorities, what are the qualifications for membership, the terms of office and the compensation?

**The commission consists of seven members: two Governor's appointees, both of whom shall be veterans; one Assembly Speaker appointee, who shall be a veteran; one Senate Rules Committee appointee, who shall be a veteran; the Secretary of Veterans Affairs who, by separate statute, must also be a veteran; and two nonvoting, ex-officio members, the Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. There are no specified terms. The legislation did not authorize payment for commission members. It is assumed that per diem and other travel expenses will be paid if the commission is ever assembled and meets.**

- ❑ For boards or commissions that are created by the reorganization, who are the appointing authorities, what are the qualifications for membership, the terms of office and the compensation?

**N/A. This commission is proposed for absorption by the Department of Veterans Affairs; it is not a new commission.**

- ❑ How will the new organization guard against special interests inappropriately influencing decision-makers?

**The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs is to promote and deliver the benefits provided by the grateful State of California to its deserving veterans and their families. Oversight of the state veterans cemetery is an ongoing responsibility as it does revolve around the basic precepts of the mission.**

**Inappropriate influence would be guarded against by adhering to sound policies and procedures and by bringing forward to an advisory group any issues that might affect matters previously dealt with by this commission. For instance, there is a semi-annual Secretary's Conference that has been established as a channel for communication between the Department and organized veterans groups. In addition, the Secretary has proposed a semi-annual meeting with the leadership of the major Veterans Service Organizations in California to discuss matters of mutual concern. Finally, the Secretary would establish *ad hoc* advisory groups, as necessary, consisting of representatives from the major Veterans Service Organizations, to gather input on matters previously under the purview of this commission.**

- How will the public be better served by reorganizing these boards or commissions and how will this improvement be measured and reported?

**Because the commission has not yet been appointed or performed any of its functions, the public will be better served by knowing that the Department of Veterans Affairs will be responsible for any such functions necessary. There will not be any confusion or uncertainty in trying to find a commission that does not exist. As needed, the Secretary could form advisory groups on an *ad hoc* basis to make determinations regarding future state veterans cemeteries. The Secretary can also obtain expert advice from professional associations or through consulting contracts as needed, on an *ad hoc* basis.**